

*The Swanson Lecture in Christian Spirituality,  
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**“What Evangelicals Should Know about Martin Luther:  
How Evangelicalism Departed from its Reformation Roots”**

(A Story of Three Protestant Paradigms)

**by Douglas H. Shantz, PhD,  
Professor of Christian Thought, University of Calgary**

## **Introduction**

Dorothy Sayers observed that the point at which most students fail is in missing the most obvious features of their subject of study. In this presentation I aim to state something very obvious, and very important, about the way Protestant Christianity has developed in the last three centuries—something obvious, yet not often recognized and noted. My purpose this evening is to consider elements of the Protestant tradition that have been lost to North American Christians, and how we lost them. There are three assumptions that inform this evening’s lecture:

1. North American Christians have a problem with Martin Luther; they have lost touch with Martin Luther. (The strangeness of Luther)
2. There is an historical explanation for this. (Evangelicalism’s own history)
3. This problem is worth remedying. (Recovering lost traditions)

*My argument* is this: By the year 1700, Protestant Christianity had begun developing significantly new practices and understandings of the Christian faith that focused upon Christian renewal, conversion, new birth and the coming millennial kingdom. These new practices and understandings were a dramatic departure not only from Roman Catholic Christianity, but also from the original Reformation convictions of Martin Luther and John Calvin some one hundred and fifty years earlier. Evangelical Christianity, of the free church variety especially, is the contemporary expression of this third form of Christianity. Probably most Evangelicals are unaware that their Christian experience and piety are far removed from Reformation Protestant beginnings. Evangelicals would do well to recover their lost heritage.

This is really the story of *Three Protestant Paradigms*: the Reformation Paradigm of Luther and Calvin; the Renewal Paradigm of the Pietists and the Wesleys; and the

Evangelical Paradigm of today.<sup>1</sup>

## **Our Problem with Martin Luther: a Forgotten, Misunderstood Reformer**

### *1. In North America*

About four years ago, Douglas John Hall from McGill University was here in Calgary as a Christian Thought lecturer. In one of his talks he made a comment that has stuck with me. He suggested that Martin Luther is a stranger to most North American Christians. “Of all the principal Reformers of the sixteenth century, Luther is the least known in Anglo-Saxon circles. Reviews of the recent film *Martin Luther*, starring Joseph Fiennes, noted that a very high percentage of US Americans (up to 85 percent) did not know who the sixteenth-century Martin Luther was, and confused the name with that of Martin Luther King Jr.”

Even within the churches, where Luther’s name is certainly known, there is a great deal of uncertainty about what he stood for. In Anglo-Christian circles, we tend to lump him together with John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, John Knox and later reformers like John Wesley...But his theology is by no means easily compatible with any of these, and it is notoriously ‘un-American’ in its refusal to deal with the kind of ‘positive thinking’ that wants no truck with the negative.<sup>2</sup>

In his recent autobiography, *Bound and Free: A Theologian’s Journey* (2005), Douglas John Hall describes growing up in a southwestern Ontario village and attending the local United Church. He found little depth or inspiration in the Christianity of his village church. But through the influence of three clergymen, at age 21 Hall “stumbled onto Luther.” He began reading Luther biographies and some of Luther’s writings. Hall describes the impact:

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<sup>1</sup> The notion of paradigm is intended to capture the idea of a distinctive set of beliefs, values, assumptions, behaviours and practices shared by members of a community. For its use in theology see Hans Küng, *Theology for the Third Millennium: An Ecumenical View*, tr. Peter Heinegg. (New York: Doubleday, 1988), pp. 171-175. I agree with Mark Greengrass when he writes: “Historians can hardly avoid fashioning and deploying conceptual models to understand the past. They are part and parcel of the way in which we shape the grand narrative of human history, map its contours, frame its periods and delineate how they relate to one another. The ideas they encapsulate gradually become part of the landscape, difficult to avoid, comforting signposts that tell us where we are...” See Mark Greengrass, “The French Pastorate: Confessional Identity and Confessionalization in the Huguenot Minority, 1559-1685,” in C. Scott Dixon and Luise Schorn-Schütte, eds., *The Protestant Clergy of Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas John Hall, *Bound and Free: A Theologian’s Journey* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), p. 137 n.7. See Hall’s 2005 article in *THE LUTHERAN*, the official magazine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

I felt at home at once. Luther's dismissal of 'works righteousness,' his explanation of 'justification by grace through faith,' his freedom from literalistic biblicism, and his irreverent and sometimes even scatological language charmed me entirely...The young Luther seemed to me to have anticipated all my doubts, shared them, and found a way of living with them—and beyond them. He didn't ask me to be a 'nice boy.' He asked me to be truthful, to be myself, to *accept* myself despite all that was truly unacceptable about me. To trust!...I would not have become a theologian had I not been introduced to this splendid, bombastic, impulsive and deeply honest human being.<sup>3</sup>

Hall says that he never thought of Luther as heroic; only human, unconstrainably human.

Hall is concerned that this reformer, who has been such an inspiration in his own life and thought, has now become a lost and forgotten figure among most North American Christians.

I am concerned that what the struggles of the Reformation produced by way of a better expression of biblical faith should not be lost to the world. I am concerned that something has come to be and to flourish that calls itself Protestant yet in essence has very little to do with the classical Protestant heritage and may in fact represent religious and moral assumptions antithetical to that heritage. Stewarding the Protestant tradition means listening attentively to the 'living faith of the dead' so that the present community of discipleship may find its way into the future.<sup>4</sup>

It is essential that we become more intentionally stewards of 'the mysteries of God' [passed down to us] in the traditions of classical Protestantism. So far as its classical expression is concerned, Protestantism in the West has been pushed further and further toward the periphery of our society. [Today's] Protestantism represents a completely different approach to theology, morality, and the nature and mission of the Christian movement.<sup>5</sup>

Hall highlights *two problems* here: *first*, North American Protestants know little or nothing of one of the major founders of their tradition; and *second*, many Evangelicals today hold views and practices that are dramatically different, even antithetical, to those of Martin Luther.

## ***2. In Germany***

One would think that the situation would be dramatically different in northern Germany, the land of Martin Luther. If one spends some time there, as I do, one encounters constant reminders of the sixteenth century German Protestant reformer. The

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<sup>3</sup> Douglas John Hall, *Bound and Free: A Theologian's Journey* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), pp. 33f.

<sup>4</sup> Hall, *Bound and Free*, p. 108.

<sup>5</sup> Hall, *Bound and Free*, p. 120.

architecture, city names, street names, university names often bring Reformation history to mind: “Lutherstadt Wittenberg”; in Eisleben, the city of Luther’s birth and death, one can still visit the house where he was born, and another where he died; the first Protestant university was founded in Marburg in 1517, and is named “Philipps-Universität Marburg.” There is also the pageantry relating to annual celebrations of Luther’s wedding to Katherina von Bora. Tourists still throng to Wittenberg to see the Luther sites: the monastery, the castle church door, and the town church. And of course scholars and communities celebrate major commemorations of events and dates related to Luther: in 1983, the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Luther’s birth; in 1996, the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Luther’s death.

Despite all this, German scholars lament that in the birthplace of Luther and the Reformation, Martin Luther is still little known. Walther von Loewenich pointed to the ignorance common among German Christians. “Many do not want to face up to their distance from Luther, *but it is there nonetheless*. Between Luther and modern people stands a world of difference.”<sup>6</sup> In 1983, on the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Luther’s birth, von Loewenich reflected on the relevance of Luther to contemporary Christians. He asked rhetorically: Who are the Christians who today are challenged by Luther, to whom Luther today still speaks? Who is the Luther who still has something to say to today’s Christians? “To once again take up a conversation between Luther and the Christian is a risky thing.”<sup>7</sup> It is a challenge that von Loewenich was determined to take up in his 1986 book, *Luther für Christen: A Challenge*, in which he introduced Luther’s life, teachings and writings to German Christians.

Hall and von Loewenich have set out some provocative questions for our consideration this evening: Have contemporary Evangelicals departed significantly from the first Protestant Reformers? And if so, how did this happen? The effort to answer these questions will involve an exploration of three Protestant Paradigms. In investigating these Paradigms, the approach will be to examine some key figures, or case studies, for each one. Then four reflective questions will be put to each of these case studies: How do they

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<sup>6</sup> Walther von Loewenich, *Luther für Christen: Eine Herausforderung* (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1986), p. 7. “Viele Christen wollen ihre Lutherfremdheit nicht wahrnehmen, die doch besteht. Zwischen Luther und dem modernen Menschen stehen Welten.”

<sup>7</sup> Walther von Loewenich, *Luther für Christen*, p. 7.

experience and understand Salvation? What is the place of Church, Liturgy and Sacraments? What is the attitude to the Christian tradition of Creeds and Confessions? What Key Words sum up the answers to these questions? Fortunately, there are rich resources available to aid us in taking up these questions. (See the handout).

## **The Reformation Paradigm: Justification by Faith**

### ***1. Martin Luther: a Medieval Man discovers Justification by Faith Alone***

The starting point in understanding Martin Luther (1483-1546) is to remember that he was a Medieval man, more specifically, a Late Medieval man. Scholarly investigation of Luther's Late Medieval setting has shed valuable light on his world, experiences and discoveries. Bernd Moeller has pointed to the flowering of Late Medieval piety. We now know that Catholic piety around the year 1500 was flourishing. Pilgrimages, endowed masses and preacherships were at an all-time high. Religious orders continued to attract bright and idealistic young men and women. Once the Benedictines had been the dominant order in the west, alongside the Cistercians and Augustinians. But by 1500, there had grown up a multitude of religious orders in Europe, all competing for the young, idealistic young men and women who wanted to serve God. Some of these were highly innovative, especially the Mendicant Orders (Franciscans and Dominicans), and the Modern Devotion represented by the *Imitation of Christ* piety of Thomas a Kempis.

At Erfurt University Luther was introduced to theological study by the most successful theology text of all time, the *Four Books of Sentences* of Peter Lombard (1100-1160), interpreted through the eyes of the *Via Moderna*. In Erfurt, under leading representatives of the *Via Moderna*, Luther studied the theology of William of Occam and Gregory Biel, in contrast to the *Via Antiqua* of Thomas Aquinas. The "modern way" tended to be more empirical, more skeptical, and more experiential. Heiko Oberman described this tradition as "the harvest of Medieval theology." Some scholars have speculated that if Luther had studied theology elsewhere, and read more of Thomas Aquinas, he might never have become a Reformer.

Of the seven sacraments offered by the Roman Catholic Church, one had become especially problematic for theologians and laity alike, the sacrament of forgiveness or

penance. Through the practice of indulgences, this sacrament had become a great source of wealth for the Church. For conscientious confessors such as Luther, it proved frustrating as a means of experiencing God's grace and forgiveness. The over-riding concern of both theologians and laity was, how do I find a gracious God?

Another prominent theological tradition in Luther's day was the Christian humanism of Reuchlin, Conrad Celtis, and Desiderius Erasmus, the most famous scholar in Europe. Erasmus applied the Renaissance humanist ideal, "back to the sources," to Christian studies. He edited editions of the writings of the Church Fathers, and in 1516 put out his famous edition of the Greek N.T. (*Novum Instrumentum*) in hopes of inspiring theologians to devote themselves to studying the Bible in the original text. It was this Greek N.T. that Luther used as the basis for his German translation of the Bible, with the help of his younger humanist colleague, Philipp Melanchthon.

These aspects of Late Medieval religion together provide some idea of Luther's world, the traditions in which he grew up, and the questions and concerns of the day. Luther was encouraged to study for his doctorate in Bible. In 1508, at age 25, he was sent to Erfurt and Wittenberg to lecture on Lombard's *Sentences* and on philosophy. In November 1510 Luther was sent to Rome as part of a delegation representing his religious order. The trip took six weeks each way and he remained in Rome for four weeks, meaning he was away 16 weeks away in all.

In October 1512 Luther was awarded the doctorate in Bible at Wittenberg University. The next year he became a regular professor of Bible there, replacing his mentor, Johann von Staupitz. As a thirty year old Bible professor in Wittenberg, Luther devoted himself to preparing lectures on the Psalms and on the letters of Paul. During the period 1512 to 1519, Luther gradually came to a fresh understanding of the gospel.<sup>8</sup>

...Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God.

In my case you may see how hard it is to struggle out of and emerge from errors which have been confirmed by the example of the whole world and have by long habit become a part of nature...I had read and taught the sacred Scriptures most diligently privately and

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<sup>8</sup> Dillenberger, *Martin Luther: Selections from his Writings*, p. xvii.

publicly for seven years [1512-1519], so that I knew them nearly all by memory. I also acquired the beginning of the knowledge of Christ and faith in him, ie. not by works but by faith in Christ are we made righteous and saved.

At last by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, “In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, ‘He who through faith is righteous shall live.’” I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. The righteousness of God is the righteousness with which the merciful God justifies us by faith, “He who through faith is righteous shall live.” Here I felt that I was altogether born again, and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me.<sup>9</sup>

Luther discovered that “God himself meets the precondition by graciously giving sinners what they require if they are to be justified.”<sup>10</sup> The believer receives this gracious gift by Faith.

For Luther, “Faith” meant three things:

i) Faith in Christ has a personal, dimension, not just a historical dimension. “You believe unreservedly that it is not only for Peter and the saints that Christ is such a person, but also for yourself.”

ii) Faith means trusting in the promises of God.

iii) Faith unites believers to Christ. “Faith unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom...So the believer can boast of an glory in whatever Christ possesses, as though it were his or her own (Christ is full of grace, life and salvation); and whatever the believer has, Christ claims as his own (the human soul is full of sin, death and damnation).” Faith is a wedding ring, pointing to mutual commitment and union between Christ and the believer.<sup>11</sup>

The *timing* of Luther’s discovery has been a source of much scholarly debate. His own recollection almost thirty years later placed it in 1519, two years after the publication of the 95 theses. Yet careful study of his lectures and commentaries during his early years of teaching reveals that he was well under way with his Reformation doctrine of grace and faith well before this. Michael Mullett has recently suggested a compromise on the dating question. By 1515-1516 Luther was teaching this truth in

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<sup>9</sup> Martin Luther, “Preface to Latin Writings,” in John Dillernberger, ed., *Martin Luther: Selections from his Writings* (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), pp. 8-11.

<sup>10</sup> Alister McGrath, *Reformation Thought, Third Edition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 109.

<sup>11</sup> McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, pp. 111-113.

lectures to his students; by 1519 he was experiencing God's grace and forgiveness in his life.<sup>12</sup> Luther's theological insights came in fits and starts. He was an occasional writer, and never produced anything like the *Loci Communes* of Melancthon, or the *Institutes* of Calvin.

Like many great men, he was pushed from issue to issue, and one wonders how he found the strength to carry through. Practically nothing which Luther did could be planned or anticipated. Once his direction was clear, he met problem after problem as they arose, making decisions profoundly affecting the developing new shape of Western history.<sup>13</sup>

Later figures such as John Bunyan and John Wesley were helped at a crucial point in their own Christian experience by the story of Luther's coming to faith and assurance of salvation.

## ***2. Luther and the Sacraments***

Why were the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformers so preoccupied with the theology of the sacraments? Today this whole discussion seems "remarkably obscure and irrelevant." Two factors explain why the sacraments received so much attention: many of the abuses within the late Medieval Roman Catholic church at this time were related to sacramental practices (indulgences for example); the sacraments were the visible face of the church for Medieval Christians. "For most lay people, the main point of contact with the church was through church services on Sunday. The main service of the Medieval church was the Latin Mass. The center of Roman Catholic worship and piety was the Mass, the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ."<sup>14</sup>

Luther had some issues with Medieval sacramental practice and understanding, particularly with reference to the Mass. He reduced the number of sacraments to three (baptism, confession, Lord's table), and then to two. A sacrament must have an outward sign and a Word of promise which demands a response of faith. "Their whole effectiveness lies in faith, and not in anything that is done."<sup>15</sup>

Luther had four objections to Catholic celebration of the Mass. He objected to the Catholic practice of offering communion in one kind (just the bread). By 1200, out of increasing concern over the laity's carelessness with the wine, they were banned from

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<sup>12</sup> Michael A. Mullett, *Martin Luther* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 62.

<sup>13</sup> Dillenberger, *Martin Luther*, p. xiii.

<sup>14</sup> McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, pp. 169f.



receiving the wine. Luther insisted that Christ's blood was shed for all, and this should be demonstrated by giving the chalice to all. He objected to the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation and its reliance upon the Aristotelian distinctions of transubstantiation and its appeal to "essence" and "accidents." Luther objected to the belief that the Eucharist was a good work performed by the priest that earned merit.<sup>16</sup> And Luther objected to celebration of the Mass in Latin rather than the vernacular. Possibly more significant, however, is what Luther retained in his teaching on the Mass. Luther had no problem believing that Christ was bodily present in the bread and wine. He believed that the best understanding of Jesus' words in Matthew 26:26, was that "the bread and wine really did become the body and blood of Christ."

Luther understood faith to be a gift of God, received at Baptism. For Luther, "the sacraments mediate the Word of God, which is capable of evoking faith. Infant baptism emphasizes that faith is not something we can achieve on our own, but something which is given to us graciously."<sup>17</sup> "Baptism justifies nobody; rather, faith in the Word of the promise to which baptism was conjoined, is what justifies." "When faith is present, they most assuredly and effectively impart grace."<sup>18</sup> Luther defended infant baptism.

I agree with everyone in saying that infants are helped by vicarious faith: the faith of those who present them for baptism. The word of God is powerful enough to change the hearts of the ungodly, and these are not less capable than any infant. All things are possible in response to the prayers of a believing church when it presents the infant, and this infant is changed, cleansed and renewed by their infused faith.<sup>19</sup>

And so Luther remained a Medieval man, with great appreciation for Catholic traditions, creeds, and institutions. For Luther, "All the sacraments were instituted to feed our faith." "The sacraments are effective signs of grace."<sup>20</sup>

### ***3. Features of the Reformation Paradigm: the Four Questions***

#### **How does Luther understand Salvation?**

Salvation for Luther means Justification, receiving God's righteousness as a gift, by faith in God's Word of promise. Forgiveness and freedom from sin are entirely the gift

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<sup>15</sup> (Dillenberger, pp. 295, 298)

<sup>16</sup> McGrath, pp. 176f.

<sup>17</sup> McGrath, p. 179.

<sup>18</sup> Dillenberger, pp. 300, 303f.

<sup>19</sup> Dillenberger, p. 307.

<sup>20</sup> Dillenberger, pp. 295, 298.

of God. The Reformation or “Justification Paradigm” is marked by the good news of grace in Christ and forgiveness by faith. Christian righteousness is always Christ’s righteousness for us and granted to us. Christian existence is marked by *simul justus et peccator*—the awareness that in this world we are sinners who live by faith and hope, always in need of grace and forgiveness.

**What is the role of Church, Liturgy and Sacraments?**

The sacraments are outward signs accompanied by a Word of promise. When used faithfully, they mediate faith and God’s grace to believers and their children. Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration, and creates faith in the infant. The Lord’s Supper is the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, and strengthens believers in faith. Luther retained the traditional liturgy of the Medieval Mass, translated into the language of the people. He retained the traditional liturgical readings, and the prescribed Gospel texts as the basis for each Sunday’s sermon.

**What is his attitude to the Christian Tradition of Creeds and Confessions?**

Martin Luther’s catechisms in 1529 were based upon the traditional three forms of Christian belief: the Ten Commandments, The Apostles’ Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer.

**What Key Words sum up his answers to these questions?**

Grace, faith, repentance, forgiveness, justification, Word of promise, preaching.

**The Renewal Paradigm: German Pietism and the Wesleys**

The Renewal Paradigm of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries represented a significant departure from the Reformation Paradigm on each of the above points. What conditions and circumstances accompanied the rise of this new religious Paradigm?

The two centuries after the Protestant Reformation of Luther and Calvin saw great upheavals socially, culturally, and politically. In the German setting there was a similar experience of upheaval and social conflict under the impact of the Thirty Years War from 1618 to 1648. It was the most devastating war in European memory. Many communities across Europe lost over half their citizenry to violence, famine and sickness. There were huge migrations across Europe as people were uprooted and unsettled. By the late seventeenth century, there was a mood of new beginning. Uprooted minorities had to learn to live with one another. French Huguenot migrations from France brought skilled

French Calvinist craftsmen and women and their families to small German territories and towns. There was a similar rise of sectarian groups and millenarian hopes among many German Christians.

The common thread in these developments was the desire for a new beginning, accompanied among many by the desire to aspire for a new level of Christian experience and attainment in Christian living. A commonly shared conviction was that the Reformation had made a good beginning in terms of *doctrine*; but now the Reformation should be completed in terms of a reformation of *life*. Two figures stand out as eloquent embodiments of these hopes for a renewal of Christianity in their day.

### ***1. German Pietism: August Hermann Francke (1663-1727)***

Written in 1691, Francke's *Lebenslauff* (autobiography, life story) covers just the first twenty-four years of his life. Francke composed his autobiography sometime in 1691 at age twenty-eight, before coming to Halle a few months later to assume the dual offices of preacher and professor. He was born in the city of Lübeck on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March, 1663. His father, Johannes Francke, served as a lawyer in the court of the Prince of Saxony. Francke's mother was Anna Gloxin, daughter of the mayor of Lübeck. While still in his youth August Hermann had a love of Bible reading and planned to study theology and become a preacher. His father died in 1670 when Francke was just seven years old. For a period of some years he was educated privately in the company of other children. At the ages of eleven and twelve he was deeply touched by the example of his pious sister Anna and began to despise the occupations, friends and games of his childhood and to seek out more worthwhile occupations.<sup>21</sup>

Francke went to the University of Erfurt in 1679 at age sixteen,<sup>22</sup> and studied Hebrew, geography, logic and metaphysics. The more he studied, the more concerned he became with worldly praise and honour. "I deviated far from the earlier good beginning in true Christianity which I had had in my childhood."<sup>23</sup> He then spent three years at the University of Kiel, the city of his mother's brother. There he studied philosophy, metaphysics, ethics, physics, Latin eloquence and authors, and read Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. Francke began study of theology in Kiel with professor Kortholt, including exegetical

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<sup>21</sup> *Herrn M. August Hermann Franckens vormahls Diaconi zu Erffurt... Lebenslauff* (1691), p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> *Herrn M. August Hermann Franckens... Lebenslauff*, p. 9.

and polemical theology, and early church history. “My theology I kept in my head, not in my heart.”<sup>24</sup> He then moved to the University of Hamburg where he could study the Hebrew Bible without spending time in extensive study of grammar. In 1685 at age 22 he completed the Master’s degree.

Francke’s conversion story has *Two Acts*: *first* he relates his misery of heart, including those things that stood in the way of his soul’s rest in God, and *second*, the steps by which he came to find rest of soul in God. In *Act I*, Francke described his “fall” from grace after a period of innocence. He noted the “good beginning” of his spiritual life as a young child marked by love for God’s word and for preaching.<sup>25</sup> He was faithful in daily devotion and prayer to God, and covenanted to devote his life to God’s service.<sup>26</sup> By age sixteen things had changed for him. “I now found in my soul little rest and joy because I recognized that I had departed far from the former good beginning of a true Christian faith which I had had in my childhood.”<sup>27</sup> Francke noted several aspects of his misery of heart. A prominent theme in his story was his giving in to worldliness, and a worldly way of life. Worldliness for Francke also included pride in his academic accomplishments. “In beginning my academic studies I had little regard for the proper goal; rather my soul became more and more caught up in the world and its vanity, so that I made it my goal to gain worldly honour, great scholarly knowledge and a good life.”<sup>28</sup> He was guilty of “love of the world” rather than love of God.<sup>29</sup>

Francke found that his university studies in theology contributed to his misery, since this study was scientific and not personally practical. He could define faith and new birth, but had no personal experience of them.

My theology I understood in my head but not in my heart; it was more a dead science than a living acquaintance. I knew well how to define Faith, New Birth, Justification and Renewal, and how to distinguish one from the other and to support it with passages from Scripture. But from all this I found nothing in my heart...I had no other notion of theological study than that a person should have in

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<sup>23</sup> *Herrn M. August Hermann Franckens... Lebenslauff*, p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> *Lebenslauff*, p. 12.

<sup>25</sup> *Lebenslauff*, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> *Lebenslauff*, p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> *Lebenslauff*, p. 10. “Indessen fand ich auch in meinem Gemüht wenig Ruhe und vergntügung, weil ich wol erkante, daß ich von dem ehemaligen guten anfang eines wahren Christenthums, den ich in der kindheit gehabt, weit abgewichen.” (p. 10)

<sup>28</sup> *Lebenslauff*, p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> *Lebenslauff*, p. 13.

his head the theological discussions and theological books and be able to discuss them intelligently. I knew that theology was defined as a practical discipline (*habitus practicus*) but I was more concerned with the theory.<sup>30</sup>

Later on he noted: “My knowledge had increased but along with it I was more and more puffed up [with pride].”<sup>31</sup> He could engage in theological discussions and partake in the sacraments, yet he had no ability to live the Christian life.

I many times formed the intention of tearing myself from the world and its vanity, and I saw and recognized that the life of students as it was generally lived, and as I was living it, did not accord with the word of God...In all my studies I was nothing more than a hypocrite, who in fact did go to church services, to confession and to the Lord’s supper, sang and prayed and engaged in edifying discussions and read good books, but did not derive from these the strength to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live modestly, righteously and godly, not only outwardly but also inwardly.<sup>32</sup>

Francke summed up his condition as a twenty-four year old: “I was little better than an unfruitful tree which bears many leaves but for the most part rotten fruit.”<sup>33</sup>

In *Act Two*, Francke described his soul’s conversion to God. He described several aspects of this conversion. It began with his “outward searching” for God in such things as devotion and study, but this brought only further misery and doubt. After completing his Master’s degree he met regularly with other theology students in a seminar setting that he called the *Philobiblicum*. They would study a chapter of the Old Testament and one from the New, analysing them in the original Hebrew and Greek languages. Spener himself encouraged them with suggestions. Soon the group outgrew its small setting in the home of a friend of Francke.<sup>34</sup> On one occasion as he was reading scripture the thought suddenly came to him: “Who knows whether the [Christian] Scriptures are God’s word; when the Turks believe this of their *Qur’an* and the Jews likewise of their Talmud, who can say who is right?”<sup>35</sup> This kind of question one also finds in a Puritan such as John Bunyan, reflecting the new climate of Enlightenment scepticism.

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<sup>30</sup> *Lebenslauff*, p. 12. “Meine theologiam faste ich in den kopff, und nicht ins hertz...”

<sup>31</sup> *Lebenslauff*, p. 21.

<sup>32</sup> *Lebenslauff*, pp. 11f.

<sup>33</sup> *Lebenslauff*, p. 22. “Demnach kan ich anders nicht sagen als daß ich wol vierundzwanzig Jahr nicht viel besser gewesen als ein unfruchtbarer baum, der zwar viel laub aber mehrentheils faule früchte getragen.”

<sup>34</sup> *Lebenslauff*, pp. 16f.

In 1687, at age 24, Francke finally experienced deliverance from the intellectual impasse at which he had arrived. Francke had been invited to preach at St. John's Church in Lüneburg. He chose as his text John 20:31, then realized he himself did not have the faith of which the text spoke. He wrote, "I would gladly have believed everything, but I could not. I sought to help myself in this way and that, but achieved nothing."<sup>36</sup> In a moment of complete resignation of heart, a kind of mystical experience overcame him.

Then in the midst of such utter denial of God, which was in my heart, my whole life to that point came before my eyes, just as if one were to look out over a city from a high tower...Then my whole life, and everything I had done, said and thought, was presented to me as so much sin and a great horror before God...This misery caused me many tears, something to which I was not normally prone. I fell to my knees and called upon him whom I still did not know. Then I prayed, if there really were a God, that he might take pity on me.<sup>37</sup>

The next Sunday evening Francke, in great anxiety of mind, fell to his knees in prayer, and cried out to God to save him from his miserable condition.

Then the Lord heard me, the living God, from his throne as I knelt...For as someone might turn over their hand, so all my doubts vanished and I was assured in my heart of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. I could address God not only as God but as my Father. In an instant all my sadness and unrest of heart were taken away, and I was suddenly overwhelmed as if by a stream of joy, so that I praised and magnified God with a full heart, who had shown me such wonderful grace...When I had got down on my knees, I did not believe that there was a God; when I got up I would, without any fear and doubt, have confirmed [it] with the spilling of my blood. All my doubts were gone, and I was assured in my heart of the grace of God in Jesus Christ.<sup>38</sup>

When he went to bed he couldn't sleep for joy. Three days later he preached his sermon "with great joy of heart."<sup>39</sup> Francke reckoned this to be his true conversion, a conversion that "was not my work but God's work."<sup>40</sup>

There are two sets of metaphors that Francke employs in this account, one relating to his condition prior to his conversion, the other to God's role in delivering him. Some

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<sup>35</sup> *Lebenslauff*, p. 26. "Ich meynte, an die H. Schrifft würde ich mich doch halten können, aber bald kam mir in den Sinn, wer weiß ob auch die H. Schrifft Gottes wort ist, die Türcken geben ihren Alcoran, und die Juden ihren Talmud auch dafür aus, wer wil nun sagen, wer recht habe."

<sup>36</sup> *Lebenslauff*, p. 27. "Wie gerne hätte ich alles geglaubet, aber ich konte nicht. Ich suchte auff diese und jene weise mir selbst zu helffen, aber es reichte nichts hin."

<sup>37</sup> *Lebenslauff*, p. 27.

<sup>38</sup> *Lebenslauff*, p. 29.

<sup>39</sup> *Lebenslauff*, p. 31.

of Francke's most picturesque language he used in portraying his helplessness of soul. He described himself as "ensnared," "caught in deep mire," "someone bound hand and foot."<sup>41</sup> Prior to his spiritual awakening, "It was as if I had spent my whole life in a deep sleep, and had done everything in a dream."<sup>42</sup> He several times referred to his condition as that of "a weak child."<sup>43</sup>

In describing his deliverance, Francke's favourite metaphors for God were the loving Mother and Father.

God took me by the hand, as it were, and lead me as a Mother leads her weak child. So great and overwhelming was his love that he would seize me again when I had torn myself free from his hand, and so caused me to feel the rod of his correction (punishment)...God had patience with me and helped me in my weakness... O how pleasant to me was this first milk with which God feeds his weak children!<sup>44</sup>

In another passage, Francke changed to the Father image.

So great was his Father love that he did not gradually remove my doubts and unrest of heart, but so that I would be even more convinced and a bridle laid upon my unruly reason, he answered me suddenly. ...I was assured that I could call God not just God but my Father.<sup>45</sup>

Such images bear the weight of the strong emotions that accompanied Francke's change of heart.

A.H. Francke lived and died in the Evangelical Lutheran Church. But for many Lutherans, his conversion piety was highly suspect. Even such a reform-minded Lutheran as Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf of the Moravians opposed Francke's stress upon conversion. Zinzendorf proclaimed that if Francke's kind of conversion was necessary, then he was not converted. Zinzendorf's was a cheerful Christianity, and he found the dour, depressive, self-centered struggle through repentance and faith too much. "We ride, while the Pietists go on foot," said Zinzendorf.<sup>46</sup> He thought that Francke's way took too long and actually delayed the conversion of many by setting up arbitrary barriers and hurdles.

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<sup>40</sup> *Lebenslauff*, p. 25.

<sup>41</sup> *Lebenslauff*, p. 23.

<sup>42</sup> *Lebenslauff*, p. 29.

<sup>43</sup> *Lebenslauff*, pp. 24f, 31.

<sup>44</sup> *Lebenslauff*, pp. 25, 24, 30.

<sup>45</sup> *Lebenslauff*, p. 29.

<sup>46</sup> W.R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), p. 136.

I hold all general principles as to the way one must conceive the process of conversion in the soul as pedantic, scholastic, fanatical or even nonsensical. Francke's penitential struggle (*Busskampf*) is mostly a chimera, an imaginary illness, a self-induced sickness. Christ had suffered this struggle for all humankind; all we need do is cast ourselves upon Christ.<sup>47</sup>

Zinzendorf mocked the "methodism" of Halle. This observation nicely introduces the piety of John Wesley.

## ***2. English Methodism: John Wesley (1703-1791)***

Wesley's England in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was a small country. In 1701 there were 5.1 million people; by 1751 there were 5.8 million; and by 1801 there were 8.7 million. The city of London by this time had a population of one 1 million. England had a predominantly rural and village character. In 1750 about 15% of the population lived in towns; by 1800 this rose to 25%; by 1851 this rose to 50% who lived in towns.<sup>48</sup> The social conditions of England in the early 1700s are comparable to underdeveloped countries today. Life-expectancy was about 35 years of age, with high infant mortality. In 1715 about 45% of men and 25% of women were literate; by 1760 it stood at 60% men and 40% women.

John Wesley was born on June 17, 1703 to Samuel and Susanna Wesley. Relatively little is known of his early life; his surviving correspondence and diaries begin in 1720. Wesley's father, Samuel, was "learned, zealous, pious, affectionate"; he was also obstinate, passionate, partisan and pedantic." He had an emotional, poetic and impractical temperament. One fault of Samuel's deeply affected the family: his "chronic state of debt." As vicar of Epworth his salary of 160 pounds per year was hardly enough to sustain a large family. He was jailed for debt in 1705, but appealed to the Archbishop of York, the debts were paid, and he was released. John Wesley's mother Susanna was the opposite of Samuel: competent, businesslike, cool and rational. Henry Rack observed that "the character of the father seems to have been inherited by Charles Wesley, and that of the mother by John."<sup>49</sup> Charles was poetic, emotional, hasty, self-dramatizing and manic-depressive. John had his mother's cool intelligence, practicality, and concern for neatness

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<sup>47</sup> Ward, p. 137.

<sup>48</sup> Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Rack, pp. 49, 51.



and order.

Susanna had a profound influence upon John. During her husband's absence in 1712, she experimented with house meetings on Sunday afternoon within her own family. They began with prayers, and she read a sermon. Soon 200 parish members had joined them. Readings from Danish Pietist missionaries in India were popular. Rack suggested that these meetings of Susanna represented the prototype of Wesley's later Methodist societies. John also grew up under Susanna's famous system of child-rearing. She believed that as early as possible one must "break the will" of the child; only on this foundation could Christian education proceed.<sup>50</sup> This may account for John's own authoritarian personality and troubled relationships with women throughout the rest of his life.

John's *Journal* recounted his spiritual progress from the time he was ten years old. He carefully noted the various stages of his spiritual development. Up until age 10 he understood that "I could only be saved by obedience, by keeping all the commandments of God." But inward obedience was something he never learned. At School till age 17, he became guilty of outward sins. "However, I still read the Scriptures and said my prayers, morning and evening." His hopes for salvation lay in: not being as bad as other people; reading the Bible, going to church, and saying his prayers.<sup>51</sup> During his five years at Oxford University, he wrote, "I still said my prayers both in public and in private and read the Scriptures and other books of religion, especially commentaries on the New Testament. Yet I had not all this while so much as a notion of inward holiness..." At age 22 there were two significant developments. His father urged him to "enter into Holy Orders." And he began reading *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas a Kempis. "I began to see that true religion was seated in the heart and that God's law extended to all our thoughts as well as words and actions. I was, however, very angry at Kempis for being too strict..."<sup>52</sup> At this point Wesley, along with some friends, began to live a more disciplined Christian life. They took communion once a week; they devoted an hour or two each day for prayer and Bible reading; he examined himself daily for sins of word or deed; he prayed for inward holiness. "By my continued endeavour to keep God's whole

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<sup>50</sup> Rack, pp. 55f.

<sup>51</sup> Emilie Griffin, ed., *John and Charles Wesley: Selected Prayers, Hymns and Sermons* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), p. 31.

<sup>52</sup> *John and Charles Wesley*, p. 32.

law, inward and outward, to the utmost of my power, I was persuaded that I should be accepted of him and that I was in a state of salvation.” In 1730, Wesley began visiting prisons, assisting the poor and sick, and “doing what other good I could by my presence...” “Yet after continuing some years in this course, I could not find that all this gave me any comfort or any assurance of acceptance with God.”<sup>53</sup>

On ship to Georgia, John met up with twenty-six Moravian missionaries “who endeavoured to show me a more excellent way. But I understood it not at first.” “I was still beating the air. Being ignorant of the righteousness of Christ, which by a living faith in him, bringeth salvation to ‘every one that believeth.’ (Romans 1:16) I sought to establish my own righteousness.” “Before I had willingly served sin; now it was unwillingly, but still I served it. I fell and rose and fell again. I had short anticipations of the life of faith...”<sup>54</sup> Martin Luther and German Protestantism would play a significant role in Wesley’s spiritual struggle. On ship to Georgia, and while there, Wesley taught himself German by studying hymns from Pietist hymnbooks. “He sought to work out his personal problems in terms of the thirty-three German hymns he translated while he was in Georgia.” These were mainly Confessional Lutheran hymns, Halle Pietist hymns, and Moravian hymns.<sup>55</sup> However, it should be noted that, in contrast to Pietism, “Methodism was not a millenarian sect, though Wesley sometimes thought they might be living close to the ‘last times’ and a millennial outpouring of the gospel on earth.”<sup>56</sup>

On his return to England in January 1738, Wesley found himself fearful of dying on the rough seas. He realized that “the cause of that uneasiness was unbelief...” “Gaining a true, living faith was the one thing needful for me.” Peter Böhler in London explained to him that true faith had two parts: constant peace from a sense of forgiveness (pardon for all past sins), and dominion over sin (freedom from all present sins). Böhler demonstrated these truths from the Bible, and then introduced three friends who likewise had this twofold experience of faith.<sup>57</sup> By now Wesley was convinced of his need to experience this justifying, saving faith. On Wednesday, May 24 he went in the evening to Aldersgate Street to hear someone who was reading Luther’s Preface to the Epistle to the

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<sup>53</sup> *John and Charles Wesley*, pp. 33f.

<sup>54</sup> *John and Charles Wesley*, p. 35.

<sup>55</sup> W.R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), p. 310.

<sup>56</sup> Rack, p. 382.

Romans. “About a quarter to nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine* and saved *me* from the law of sin and death...Now I was always conqueror.”<sup>58</sup>

Wesley’s theology, like Luther’s, was worked out in the course of a busy pastoral life. Also like Luther, Wesley’s concern was with the way of salvation. While Luther had focused on the way of *justification*, Wesley focused on the way of *sanctification*.” For Wesley, there were three main doctrines: repentance, faith and holiness. “The first of these we account the porch of religion; the next the door; the third, religion itself.” This is very different from Luther’s emphasis upon justification by faith.<sup>59</sup> “What mattered most to Wesley was doctrine concerned with personal salvation as the achievement of holiness to the point of perfection.” This becomes evident in his pastoral correspondence. “He sought to distinguish ‘formal’ from ‘heart’ religion and to make clear the need for ‘faith working by love.’ Believers should concentrate on two points: Christ dying for us, and Christ reigning in us.” “While Wesley retained the basic notion that justification comes by grace through faith, he was constrained by experience to allow that this could be prepared for by good works which had some real value. The placing of repentance and faith as the ‘porch’ and ‘door’ to real religion as a life of holiness relates to his long-standing concern with holiness, which became his priority.”<sup>60</sup> Wesley’s 1738 experience of forgiveness “took its place within the long-term project of holiness as the mark of true Christianity; justification was a means to this end, not the end in itself.”<sup>61</sup>

Wesley taught a doctrine of “Christian perfection,” “entire sanctification,” “perfect love,” “the great salvation,” “the second blessing.” He rejected the term, “sinless perfection.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *John and Charles Wesley*, p. 37.

<sup>58</sup> *John and Charles Wesley*, p. 38.

<sup>59</sup> Rack, pp. 388f.

<sup>60</sup> Rack, pp. 381, 382.

<sup>61</sup> Rack, p. 391. “It is significant that [Wesley’s] views [on the doctrine of justification] altered through the years, despite his occasional denials.” () Tuttle divided Wesley’s theological progress into three distinct periods: 1) salvation by grace through assurance (1738-1747); 2) salvation by grace through faith (1748-1762); 3) salvation by grace through faith confirmed by works (1763-1788). See R. G. Tuttle, *John Wesley: His Life and Theology* (1979), p. 331. Alan C. Clifford, pp. 59, 64 n.47.

“Prayer: Spirit of Faith, come down”:  
...Inspire the living faith...The faith that conquers all,  
And doth the mountain move,  
And saves who'er on Jesus call, And perfects them in love. (1746)

He adapted the Moravian notion of instant conversion and assurance, and applied it to his notion of “second conversion.”

Wesley can be credited with at least three great achievements. 1) Wesley was himself a model of Methodist self-discipline and zeal. His motto was: “Do all the good you can, By all the means you can, In all the ways you can, In all the places you can, At all the times you can, To all the people can, As long as ever you can.” Wesley embodied his strict message. He reported that “Once in seven years I burn all my sermons, for it is a shame if I cannot write better sermons now than I did seven years ago.”<sup>63</sup> 2) His movement became a powerful worldwide denomination, or set of denominations belonging to the family of worldwide Methodism. 3) He successfully captured a religious minority which might otherwise have been lost to religious life. However, Wesley’s aim had always been to “revive the nation, and especially the church, and to spread scriptural holiness through the land.”<sup>64</sup> In this, Rack suggested, he largely failed. Methodism did not revive the Anglican church; it separated from it.

Wesley eventually came to see that Luther and Calvin and their successors magnified faith to such an amazing size that it quite hid all the rest of the commandments. This was the natural effect of *their overgrown fear of popery*, being so terrified with the cry of merit and good works that they plunged at once into the other extreme. Wesley found some English writers who “relieved me from these well-meaning wrongheaded Germans.”<sup>65</sup> He came to see that Luther’s denigration of good works inspired antinomian libertinism. By 1741 Wesley had come to see Luther’s *Galatians* as a “dangerous treatise,” and was ashamed that he had once esteemed the work highly. “Wesley rejected ‘sola-fideism’ as commonly understood. This marked a significant shift in his thought away from a strictly Lutheran view of justification, and the reasoning behind these and related changes requires investigation.” Wesley had a falling out with

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<sup>62</sup> Rack, pp. 395f.

<sup>63</sup> *John and Charles Wesley*, (2004), p. xii.

<sup>64</sup> Rack, p. 551.

Zinzendorf over these very issues. Count Zinzendorf and the Moravians shared Luther's view that Christians never cease from being "miserable sinners until death." This "alarmed Wesley, who believed that the saved sinner must be progressively different from his pre-conversion state."<sup>66</sup>

### ***3. Features of the Renewal Paradigm: the Four Questions***

#### **How does the Renewal Paradigm, represented in Francke and Wesley, experience and understand Salvation?**

Salvation is a conversion and new birth, experienced through the instantaneous working of God. The renewal paradigm removes the paradox of *simul justus et peccator*, arguing for renewal of the individual, the church and society by regenerate love and holiness.

#### **What is the role of Church, Liturgy and Sacraments?**

The church and sacraments are important, but become less central than for Luther and Calvin. In 1756 Wesley put out a revised version of his father's tract on baptism, which showed that baptism washes away original sin, and "by this we are regenerated or born again." "Wesley never really gave up the idea that people could be born again in baptism."<sup>67</sup> Francke and Wesley retained traditional Lutheran and Anglican liturgical worship. Wesley remained Anglican in his appreciation for its liturgy, sacraments and priesthood; Francke remained Lutheran.

#### **What is their attitude to the Christian tradition of Creeds and Confessions?**

Francke and Wesley retained many of the traditions in which they had been raised. They respected the Church Fathers and early Christian creeds. Francke respected the Lutheran *Book of Concord*; Wesley was less impressed with the *39 Articles*.

#### **What Key Words sum up their answers to these questions?**

Head knowledge, heart knowledge, self-examination, conversion, new birth, peace, joy, holiness.

This paradigm has been largely superseded today by the Evangelical Christian Paradigm.

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<sup>65</sup> John and Charles Wesley, (2004), p. 29.

<sup>66</sup> Alan C. Clifford, *Atonement and Justification. English Evangelical Theology 1640-1790: An Evaluation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), Chap. 4, "John Wesley," p. 59. See Wesley's *Journal*, ii, 468; and B. Semmel, *The Methodist Revolution* (1974), p. 40.

## **The Evangelical Paradigm in Contemporary Times**

There is a whole industry of research and writing focused upon American Evangelical religion. One of the best resources for keeping up with it all is the quarterly *Evangelical Studies Bulletin* produced by the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicalism in Wheaton, Illinois. Each issue includes a book review, and a listing of recent dissertations, articles and books researching aspects of Evangelicalism. Certainly the scholarly work of Mark Noll, George Marsden, and others has proved invaluable for making sense of this dominant form of Christianity in North America today.

Also revealing are movies such as *Jesus Camp*. Finally, there are travelogues by scholars who write observer-participant accounts of various aspects of Evangelical sub-culture. They include interviews and observations based on the authors' visits to Bible schools, seminaries, mega-churches, summer camps and family conferences, evangelistic meetings, and political strategy meetings. Two of these are Randall Balmer's classic, *Mine Eyes have Seen the Glory* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) and Michelle Goldberg's *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism* (2006).

### ***1. David Bebbington's Definition of "Evangelical" and New Developments***

There are a couple of senses in which the term "Evangelical" is used today. *The first* is to see as Evangelical all Christians who affirm a few key doctrines and practical emphases. British historian David Bebbington approaches Evangelicalism from this direction and notes four specific characteristics or hallmarks of Evangelical religion: *conversion*, the change of life that forms the entry way to Evangelical religion; *activism*, the expression of zeal for the gospel; *the Bible*, devoted reading and study of the Bible; and *the Cross*, stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross as the means of redemption. This definition fails to identify a couple of other key hallmarks: hopes for Christ's imminent return to establish his millennial kingdom, and Christian activism in conservative politics in seeking to turn America back to God. *A second sense* is to look at evangelicalism as an organic group of movements and religious tradition. Within this context Evangelical denotes a style as much as a set of beliefs. As a result, groups as disparate as black Baptists and Dutch Reformed Churches, Mennonites and Pentecostals, Catholic charismatics and Southern Baptists all come under the evangelical umbrella-

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<sup>67</sup> Rack, p. 395.

demonstrating just how diverse the movement really is. In the present discussion, Evangelical is used in the sense of Bebbington's definition, with special reference to non-liturgical, free church Evangelicals.

About twenty-five percent of the adult population in the USA is Evangelical. Publishers recognize this ready audience, and so publish "a deluge" of books on the subject. Evangelicals account for one out of ten people in the world. Recent studies argue that "large segments of contemporary Evangelicalism have moved toward an accommodation with American popular culture." There has also been an enduring influence of Britain over American Evangelicalism, evidence in the popularity of writings by CS Lewis, FF Bruce, and JN Darby.<sup>68</sup>

A couple of relatively recent developments in North American Evangelicalism should be noted as well, under the headings of Evangelicals and Politics and the Emergent Church Movement. The new Evangelical politics is the subject of a recent book by Michelle Goldberg, *Kingdom Coming: the Rise of Christian Nationalism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006). She documents the close alignment of Evangelicals with the Republican Party and the Bush administration. However, there are growing signs that this alignment is beginning to break apart, with more and more Evangelicals drifting to the left.<sup>69</sup> Some of this drift can be attributed to the Emergent Church Movement. For these people, Christianity is "a way of being in the world rather than believing things about the world." It seeks to fashion a new form of church, reflected in its worship, concern with action, and its missional orientation. Its worship is creative and sensory, and opposes the centrality of the sermon. They seek to practise the way of Jesus in serving others. It seeks to demonstrate the holistic redemptive work of God in the world.<sup>70</sup> Is the Emergent Church movement a significant departure from earlier forms of Evangelical Religion? It does seem to provide a haven for those burnt out by the activism and politicking discussed above.

## ***2. Features of the Evangelical Paradigm: the Four Questions***

The Evangelical Paradigm is pretty much the same as the Renewal Paradigm of

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<sup>68</sup> David Bebbington, "Not So Exceptional After All: American Evangelicalism Reassessed," *Books & Culture* (March 5, 2007).

<sup>69</sup> See David D. Kirkpatrick, "The Evangelical Crackup," *The New York Times* (October 28, 2007).

<sup>70</sup> Scot McKnight, *Christianity Today* (Feb. 2007.)

the Pietists and the Wesleys, but without the elements of tradition and continuity.

**How do Evangelicals experience and understand Salvation?**

Salvation is a conversion and new birth, experienced through the instantaneous working of God and received by faith. The common setting is the evangelistic meeting. Often missing, however, is the Renewal emphasis upon holiness and perfection.

**What is the role of Church, Liturgy and Sacraments?**

Sacraments and liturgy are seen as a barrier to the unchurched. They are largely replaced by the new sacraments: stage performance, contemporary music, worship bands.

**What is the attitude to the Christian tradition of Creeds and Confessions?**

Benign neglect. Evangelical religion has had a tendency to behave like an adolescent who thinks his or her parents don't know anything.

**What Key Words sum up their answers to these questions?**

Born again believer, personal relationship with Christ, Christ's millennial kingdom.

***3. Evangelicalism and Luther: Was Luther an Evangelical? (The Misunderstood Luther)***

While there are some similarities, much of Evangelical Protestantism today holds views and practices that are dramatically different, even antithetical, to those of Luther. Some points of similarity between Luther and today's Evangelicals include Luther's experience of conversion, of being "born again." There is also his emphasis upon the centrality of biblical preaching, and the empowering of the laity by his teaching that, by virtue of our baptism, we are all priests, bishops and popes; we are all equally Christians. However, the dissimilarities are greater.

i) Luther's Reformation vision understood the Sacraments as central to the life of the church and the believer.

ii) Luther affirmed Infant Baptism. The language of conversionist experience is missing in Luther.

iii) Luther affirmed the importance of the Church as an Institution and the meaning of the "universal priesthood." Luther's reference to "universal priesthood" must not be understood as "a wholesale rejection of the importance of structure and authority



in the church...This is not Luther's point."<sup>71</sup>

## **Remedying the Loss: Recovery of Communal, Sacramental Christianity**

### ***1. Timothy Lull***

Evangelicalism would do well to remember and to recover something of the heritage of the early Reformers such as Martin Luther. "Luther deserves more from the church today than to be ignored...Luther deserves to be read rather than read about." "Luther is a valuable resource and a classic source for theology partly because he is able to generate dialogue." (Timothy Lull, pp. 2, 6)

#### **i) Luther's View of the Sacraments**

Luther sought to preserve the mystery of God at work in Baptism and the Lord's Table. He emphasized their role as means of grace, not human works of merit.

#### **ii) Luther's Approach to Reform in the Church**

His reform is noteworthy for its caution and deliberation. His emphasis upon education and popular understanding continues to be relevant.<sup>72</sup>

### ***2. Douglas John Hall***

Stewarding the Protestant tradition means listening attentively to the "living faith of the dead" so that the present community of discipleship may find its way into the future.<sup>73</sup> Hall provides a concise list of emphases of "classical Protestantism" that he believes have been lost to Evangelicals and main line denominations alike, and that we would do well to recover:

i) Justification by grace through faith is a merciful doctrine because it refuses to rank human worth on the basis of achievement. (p. 111)

ii) Christian thought must be open to paradoxes, ambiguities, and avoid a tendency towards unchanging dogmas. Theology must be modest about its own ability to point to the mystery of God.

iii) The Bible is central to the life of the Church. Through the Bible we hear the living Word of God. The Reformers would rebuke the Biblical illiteracy of Protestant

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<sup>71</sup> Carl Trueman, "Was Luther an Evangelical?" in Peter Lillback, ed., *The Practical Calvinist* (Ross-shire: Mentor, 2002), pp. 131-148 (especially pp. 140-145).

<sup>72</sup> Timothy Lull, in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings* (1989), pp. 5f.

<sup>73</sup> Hall, *Bound and Free*, p. 108.

liberals, and the Biblical literalism of Christian conservatives. (p. 116)

iv) Doubt and doubters are welcome in the community of faith. Faith is an ongoing dialogue with doubt. Luther was uncommonly honest about his doubts. (p. 117)

### ***3. Gordon Harland***

Luther is a figure of great contemporary as well as historical importance. “The Reformation of Luther represented a deeper plunge into the meaning of the gospel.” (Philip Schaff) “Luther’s greatest achievement was to clarify the Christian understanding of the basis and the nature of the relationship between God and man.” (Gordon Harland, p. 13)<sup>74</sup>

### **Conclusion**

This evening we have considered Three Protestant Paradigms, represented in Luther, the Pietists and Wesley, and current day Evangelicalism. Each has its strengths and weaknesses. It could be argued that the Pietists and Wesley offer an interesting balance of tradition and experience, wisdom and zeal. It seems that much of Evangelicalism is in danger of losing touch with its Protestant roots and traditions.

What this lecture has argued in terms of what Evangelicals should know about Martin Luther could be extended to include knowledge of the greater Christian Tradition. At the opening of the Billy Graham Center in September 1980, Charles Malik warned that anti-intellectualism was “the greatest danger besetting American Evangelical Christianity.” The only remedy, he said, was “profound immersion in the history of [Christian] thought and spirit...conversing with the greatest minds of the past.” “Evangelicals must integrate themselves into the unity and continuity of the cumulative Christian tradition.”<sup>75</sup> For Protestants, a good place to begin this re-acquaintance with tradition, is with Martin Luther.

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<sup>74</sup> Gordon Harland, “The Contemporary Relevance of Martin Luther,” in Egil Grislis, ed., *The Theology of Martin Luther: Five Contemporary Canadian Interpretations* (Winnipeg: Lutheran Council in Canada, 1985), pp. 11-24.

<sup>75</sup> Charles Malik, *The Two Tasks* (Westchester: Cornerstone Books, 1980), pp. 22f, 33.

# Martin Luther, Pietism, Methodism and Evangelicalism

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### 2. German Pietism, August Hermann Francke and John Wesley

- Emilie Griffin and Peter C. Erb, ed. *The Pietists: Selected Writings* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006).  
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### 3. Modern Evangelicalism in Britain and America

- David W. Bebbington. *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).  
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Brian Stanley. *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism* (InterVarsity Press, forthcoming).  
Douglas A. Sweeney. *The American Evangelical Story: A History of the Movement* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005).

### 4. Online Resources

- Christian Classics Ethereal Library: [www.ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org)  
Thrivent Reformation Research Program: [www.staupitz.luthersem.edu/collections.htm](http://www.staupitz.luthersem.edu/collections.htm)  
Project Wittenberg: [www.ProjectWittenberg.org](http://www.ProjectWittenberg.org)  
Trinity College Archives, University of Toronto:  
[www.trinity.utoronto.ca/library\\_Archives/Theological\\_Resources/Anglican](http://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/library_Archives/Theological_Resources/Anglican)

**“How Evangelicalism Departed from its Reformation Roots”**  
by Douglas H. Shantz, PhD, University of Calgary

**Our Problem with Martin Luther: a Forgotten, Misunderstood Reformer**

**The Reformation Paradigm: Justification by Faith**

1. *Martin Luther (1483-1546): a Medieval Man discovers Justification by Faith Alone*
2. *Luther and the Sacraments: Baptism and the Mass*
3. *Features of the Reformation Paradigm*

**How does Luther understand Salvation?**

Salvation for Luther means Justification: receiving God’s righteousness as a gift, by faith in God’s Word of promise.

**What is the role of Church, Liturgy and Sacraments?**

The sacraments are outward signs accompanied by a Word of promise. When used faithfully, they mediate faith and God’s grace to believers and their children.

Form of worship: Luther retained the traditional liturgy of the Medieval Mass.

**What is his attitude to the Christian tradition of Creeds and Confessions?**

Martin Luther’s catechisms are based upon the traditional three forms of Christian belief: the Ten Commandments, The Apostles’ Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer.

**What Key Words sum up his answers to these questions?**

grace, faith, repentance, forgiveness, justification, Word of promise, preaching.

**The Renewal Paradigm: German Pietism and the Wesleys**

1. *German Pietism: August Hermann Francke (1663-1727)*
2. *English Methodism: John Wesley (1703-1791)*
3. *Features of the Renewal Paradigm*

**How does the Renewal Paradigm understand Salvation?**

Salvation is a conversion and new birth, through faith, experienced through the instantaneous working of God.

**What is the role of Church, Liturgy and Sacraments?**

The church and sacraments are important, but less central than for Luther and Calvin. They retain traditional Lutheran and Anglican liturgical worship. Wesley remained Anglican in his appreciation for its liturgy, sacraments and priesthood. Francke likewise remained Lutheran.

They added weekly gatherings for prayer and encouragement.

**What is their attitude to the Christian tradition of Creeds and Confessions?**

Francke and Wesley were not entirely dismissive of the traditions in which they had been raised. They respected the Church Fathers, and early Christian creeds. Francke respected the Lutheran *Book of Concord*; Wesley was less impressed with the *39 Articles*.

**What Key Words sum up their answers to these questions?**

head knowledge, heart knowledge, self-examination, conversion, new birth, peace, joy, holiness.

**The Evangelical Paradigm in Contemporary Times**

1. *David Bebbington’s Definition of “Evangelical” and New Developments*
2. *Features of the Evangelical Paradigm*

**Remedying the Loss: Recovery of Communal, Sacramental Christianity**

**Conclusion**